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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/AGS, EUR/PGI, S/CT

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/21/2016
TAGS: [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [KISL](#) [JO](#) [KU](#) [IZ](#) [GM](#)
SUBJECT: ALLEGED FRANKFURT AIRPORT TERROR PLOT DISRUPTED

Classified By: Pol-Econ Chief Dan Froats for reasons 1.4B and 1.4D

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: German authorities temporarily detained six suspected terrorists November 17 for alleged involvement in a plot to blow up an aircraft, presumably from Frankfurt International Airport. END SUMMARY.

The Alleged Plot

12. (SBU) According to a press release from the Federal Prosecutor, the six suspects allegedly sought to bribe an individual with access to secure areas and passenger aircraft. The individual was prepared to load a package or bag containing explosives onto a passenger aircraft in exchange for payment. According to press reports, the allegation involves Frankfurt Airport and Israeli airline El Al. Negotiations between the suspected terrorists and the individual reportedly stalled due to disagreement over the amount of the payment. Authorities became aware of the plot and intervened.

13. (SBU) El Al has reported that they were surprised to learn of the plot and that they were not involved in uncovering it. Some police officials publicly expressed doubt that the suspects would target El Al as one of the world's most secure airlines. Press reports quoted a Lufthansa spokesperson saying Lufthansa was not involved. Transportation Security Administration (TSA) representatives in Frankfurt have reached out to airport and government contacts, but have obtained no additional information as of yet.

Terrorist Suspects

14. (C) German authorities have not released the names of the six suspects. The Federal Prosecutor reported that German law enforcement officials searched nine apartments in the southwestern German states of Rhineland-Palatinate and Hesse on Friday November 17, and that they hoped to gain insight into the alleged terror group's organization and background through the confiscated materials obtained during searches. The Federal Prosecutor said others are believed to be involved. According to press reports the suspects were from Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, and Lebanon and some may be Palestinian. German officials released five of the suspects on November 18 after questioning -- the remaining suspect was held on unrelated charges (reportedly rape). Hesse state police (LKA) and interior ministry officials confirmed the Federal Office of Criminal Investigation (BKA) is leading the investigation and that they had no further information on the case.

Senior Fraport Official Casts Doubt

¶5. (C - NF) Volker Zintel (PROTECT), a board member and the senior security official at Frankfurt Airport, told us that the individual suspected of involvement is an airport employee working in the baggage area of the airport. According to Zintel, the employee had been suspected of involvement in small-scale drug trafficking (fewer than ten grams of marijuana) and therefore German authorities were monitoring his phones. This monitoring lead to authorities uncovering his conversations with the suspected terrorists regarding the plot to place a bomb on an aircraft, prompting the searches and questioning. Zintel commented that the monitored conversations reveal a naive discussion rather than a sophisticated terror plot by Islamic radicals. According to Zintel, none of the suspects have links to known Muslim groups, and the evidence indicates that nothing came of the plot.

¶6. (C) The Federal Ministry of the Interior cautioned Emboffs there was little that could be revealed due to the ongoing investigation. Legat has contacted BKA, which reported there was no nexus to the U.S. Legat is to report additional law enforcement sensitive information November 21 via IIR.

¶7. (U) This message was coordinated with Embassy Berlin.
POWELL